



News Release

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Drowning Prevention Focus of Safe Kids Week 2006

Safe Pools and Supervision Are the Best Ways to Prevent Drowning Deaths

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Logan Maughan, a 13-month-old Syracuse boy, is one of the lucky few Utah children to survive a drowning. His father Dave was bathing Logan and an older brother when he left the bathroom to get pajamas. Logan was under the water and not breathing when his father returned. To help launch Safe Kids Week 2006, the Maughan family shared Logan's story at a kickoff event in Murray.

"I always thought I would hear my child screaming or thrashing around if he was in trouble in the water," said Maughan. "But it was so quiet in that bathroom." Maughan called 911 and performed CPR on his son with the help of a dispatcher. Logan is healthy and suffered no long-term effects from the drowning.

The theme of Safe Kids Week is *Safe Pools for Safe Kids*. From 2003 to 2005, 35 children age 19 and under died in drowning incidents in lakes, pools, bathtubs and even ornamental ponds.

Drowning is the second leading cause of injury-related death for children in Utah. Of the 35 victims:

- 21 were 5 years old and younger
- 3 were ages 6 to 10
- 4 were ages 11 to 14
- 7 were ages 15 to 19
- 24 were male, 11 were female

Every year, another 15 Utah children survive near-drownings. "Many of the children are alive because emergency teams responded quickly enough to get them breathing again," said paramedic Andy Ostler. "Sadly, despite our best efforts, some of those children are living with brain damage from lack of oxygen," he said.

Safe Kids Utah leaders say most drownings are preventable. "For young children it's a matter of

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constant supervision,” said Safe Kids Utah Coordinator Sharon Hines-Stringer. “They can die in a bathtub, a public pool even with lifeguards around or a fast-moving creek if you turn away for even a second.”

For older children and teens, the problem is often that victims overestimate their swimming ability.

“Among older children, it’s overwhelmingly boys who drown, most often in lakes and rivers, sometimes because they think they are stronger swimmers than they really are,” said Patti O’Connor, director of Preparedness Programs for the Greater Salt Lake Area Chapter of the American Red Cross. “That’s why all children need to start swimming lessons early and continue with them until they’re experienced in the water,” she said.

Another concern is the problem of spa and pool entrapments, where a child’s hair, clothing or body part can get sucked into a drain or tangled in an underwater ladder. With home pool and spa ownership growing, families need to invest in special drain covers and teach children how to stay safe.

The four primary water safety tips for any situation are:

- **SUPERVISION** – Designate an adult to **actively** supervise kids around water.
- **ENVIRONMENT** – Install multiple layers of protection around pools and spas.
- **GEAR** – Make sure all children have the right life jacket for their age and size.
- **EDUCATION** – Teach children to swim and educate them about water safety.

Other tips include:

- Parents should take a course in CPR.
- Parents should never let a young child bathe alone or rely on an older child for supervision.
- “Floaties” and “water wings” are toys and do not prevent drowning.
- Children should not swim near the engine area of a houseboat.
- All family members should wear a life jacket while on a boat. Flotation devices do no good if they’re stored away.

Safe Kids Week is May 6 to 13. Safety events will take place all month and will include water safety activities, health fairs, Scout-O-Rama events and Child Passenger Safety Checkpoints. For more information on activities in your area, visit www.utahsafekids.org. For more information on drowning prevention, call Sharon Hines-Stringer at 801-538-6852 or 304-657-0329.

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